

We recently conducted a poll of Twin Cities Soccer Referees Organization (TCSRO) members to gauge their opinions on the newly-mandated MSHSL soccer referee uniform. The survey was sent our 80 members at the time (we are now over 100 members); 61 referees responded to the survey. **Our membership is strongly opposed to the new MSHSL uniform with over 60 percent of respondents opposed (12%) or strongly opposed (42%) to the new uniform requirement.** Less than a quarter (15/61) supported the new uniform.

We conducted a second independent survey of non-TCSRO member high school soccer. Non TCSRO members are more opposed to the mandate. **45.2% strongly opposed and 20.5% opposed the mandate.** Only 10 of 84 respondents supported or strongly supported the mandate.

It is clear to TCSRO that the jersey mandate is a solution in search of a problem. The limited information provided by MSHSL has been that officials are not wearing “matching” jerseys. No information has been offered to substantiate that claim, but the data from this survey demonstrate that this is a very uncommon problem where nearly every referee has the “ubiquitous” yellow jersey.

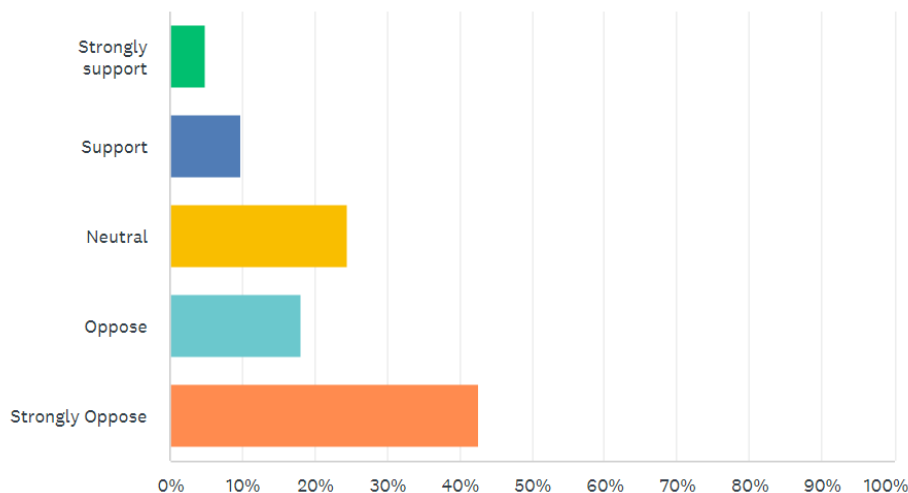
Furthermore, TCSRO is concerned that MSHSL is willing to push this mandate when we are facing a referee shortage in soccer. Multiple referees indicated they plan to retire or simply quit refereeing high school soccer. That is a steep price to pay for a rebate from a (ostensible) one-time purchase of a jersey.

Experienced Referees Working Heavy High School Schedules

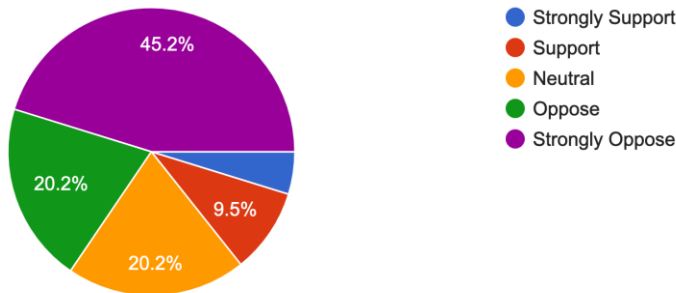
An overwhelming majority (89%) of the referees responding to the survey also officiate USSF soccer and have two or more USSF jerseys. Similarly, 83% of non-members also referee USSF soccer, and 89% have two or more USSF jerseys. Ninety-two percent of the referees have four or more years experience with 64 percent having eight or more years experience. Three-quarters of the officials worked more than 20 games in the 2021 season with over a quarter (28%) working more than 40 matches over the course of the high school season.

Officials Are Strongly Opposed to the Uniform Mandate

A majority of TCSRO members oppose the uniform mandate.



Two-thirds (55/84) of the respondents in this non-member referee survey oppose the uniform mandate.



Referees Have Current USSF Jerseys

Every member survey respondent indicated that they have a current USSF jersey. All but one respondent (60/61) has a current USSF green jersey with almost all officials having red (93%), blue (93%) and black (89%) USSF jerseys. The majority of referees (56%) did not experience a crewmate in an older style USSF jersey; an additional seventeen percent had this happen one time during the season. As several of our members asked in the survey comments, what problem is the MSHSL trying to solve with this mandate?

Similarly, nearly all the respondents in the non-TCSRO group owned a current yellow USSF jersey—in fact most also had multiple colors. 97.6% (82/84) have a current jersey—that means there are only two respondents who do not have a current jersey which again raises the question: what problem is MSHSL trying to solve? This is especially true where there are only two referees out of 145 respondents (1.4%) who do not have a current jersey—but MSHSL needs to impose this jersey mandate for several hundred soccer officials rather than address handful of referees who do not have a current jersey?

Of the non-TCSRO members, 63.3% have not worked with someone who did not have a current jersey. The remaining data suggests that those working with referees who do not have the current jersey are running into the same referee who is not wearing the updated jersey. This is particularly true where almost all of the respondents had two or more jerseys. Of the non-TCSRO group, the officials have red (89.3%), Green (88.1%), Blue (81.1%), and Black (78.6%). Only 3 respondents (3.6%) indicated they had no additional colors (one of whom did not have a current jersey).

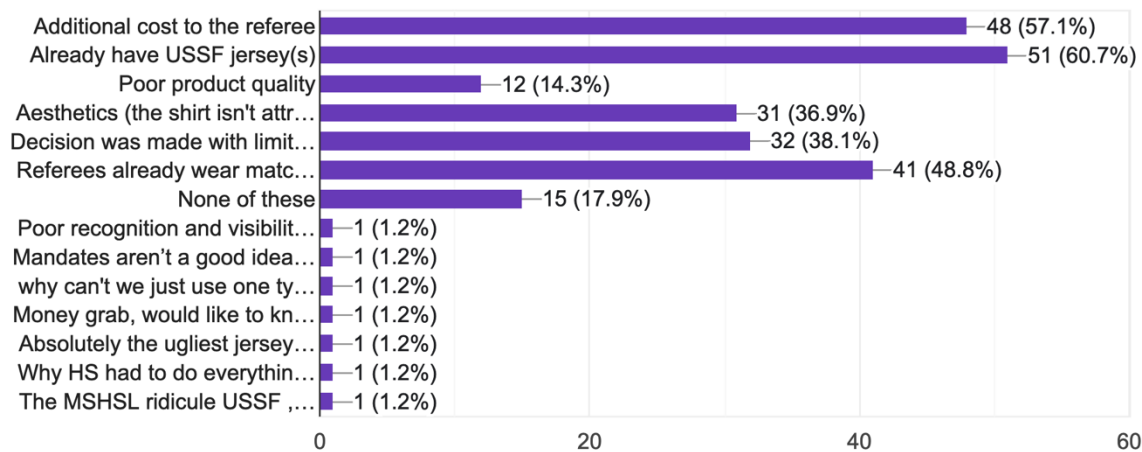
Referees Have Specific Reasons Why They Oppose the Mandate

We asked our member referees to list the top reasons why they oppose the MSHSL uniform mandate. Over half indicated they also have current USSF uniforms and noted the additional cost to the referee. The aesthetics of the jersey was also noted by a significant number of referees (44%).

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ Already have USSF jerseys	60.66% 37
▼ Addition cost for the referee	50.82% 31
▼ Aesthetics (the shirt isn't attractive)	44.26% 27
▼ Referees already wear matching uniforms	37.70% 23
▼ Decision was made with limited input from referees	32.79% 20
▼ None of the above	14.75% 9
▼ Poor product quality	8.20% 5
▼ Other (please specify) Responses	8.20% 5

Non-TCSRO member responses:

84 responses



While TCSRO referees are opposed to the new uniform, many TCSRO officials (57%) grudgingly have purchased or are planning to purchase the new uniform. Several noted in the comments that they are only buying the uniform to facilitate their participation in the State Tournament. More important, perhaps, is the number of people considering giving up refereeing because of the new jerseys. Interestingly, 65.5% percent of non-TCSRO members polled (55/84) indicated they would not be buying a MSHSL jersey.

Respondent Comments

We provided an opportunity for referees to offer their comments on the mandated uniform.

Multiple referees noted that the uniform requirement impacts their decision to officiate high school soccer this season.

This new jersey is just another reason to make me consider quitting high school soccer.

Not buying extra shirt.

I will not referee high school soccer again until improvements in pay and quality of officials improves

Quitting because of the jersey requirement. It's unnecessary. Lack of fee increases also a factor. Not worth my time.

Due to the short HS season, I'm considering just quitting doing HS games. This is not needed and just alienates officials as it was done without input of the soccer refereeing community. I have heard many others considering quitting. Many officials are just going to stop doing HS games rather than buying the new tops, and I am one of them.

I've been sitting on the fence about getting my MSHSL certification or even working HS jobs. I already purchased other colors which I don't use, and now having another one to sit in my closet for a league I rarely cover because of time or other constraints seems a waste.

I will not referee if this is added.

The new jerseys do not improve the overall quality of high school sport. It will only create another level of barrier to new and returning officials, in an era of record breaking inflation. This will lead to another round of experienced officials retiring.

Multiple female referees have noted sizing and fit issues for the shirts.

I'm undersized. They don't make it small enough to fit me.

I don't care for the color scheme or style. I also tried on a similar shirt at General Sports, and didn't care for the fit or the comfort of the material.

Referees feel like they have been coerced into buying the new MSHSL uniform.

I purchased the new uniform not because I wanted to but because MSHSL compelled me to by requiring it for State. Because the second order "won't arrive before October," I felt forced to buy a uniform that I likely will not wear at all during the regular season. This process has financially punished referees who strive to earn spots at State based on KSA's (Knowledge, Skill, Ability) and has made financial ability the main prerequisite to refing at State. That is the antithesis of equity, professionalism and ensuring that only the best refs get assigned the most important games.

Seems like an excuse for the high school league to make their business partner money without benefit to anyone else

Felt I had to buy but will only wear if forced

A significant number of referee comments focused on the uniform design and fit.

What the hell were they thinking? That is about the ugliest shirt I have ever seen and I grew up in 60's & 70's so I've seen some pretty ugly stuff.

A single MSHSL uniform is long over due. The issue is the uniform design is absolutely awful. It is a modified American football zebra stripe, large lapel collar and pocket flaps do not represent the modern soccer referee. Other states worked closely with Smitty and have acceptable uniforms. Not sure why and who approves this design.

There are too many other issues facing referees. We don't need to tax referees do fund MSHSL by imposing a useless (and truly horrendous, football referee jersey)

The new jersey is ugly. I would rather quit than wear that.

The Jersey is Ugly Ugly Ugly!!!